/54 cont./

846 117. From this simple definition it can be deduced that the ethnologists who attribute these precautions to the father alone are in error. At least among the Pemón and other related tribes, it seems positively certain to me that the precautions are common to both parents. Could it be that, since these precautions in mothers do not attract attention because they are a common thing, the writers noticed only the males?

But in addition to paying attention only to the males, they have even gone to the extreme of inverting these terms, writing, for example: "The covada consists in the father, a little before the child is born, getting into bed, going on a diet, resting, and doing everything that a parturient woman does, and he is attended by women pretending that he has given birth. By contrast, the woman would get up after the birth and dedicate herself to her usual domestic chores."

Wise ethnologists, whose authority we cannot question /55/ state, regarding certain tribes, that the men went so far in their precautions and anxieties to avoid every danger to the newborn and for other reasons which we shall later see, as to stay in bed as if they really had given birth. But in none of these have I read up to the present time that, inversely, the woman should not stay in bed at least a while nor not take other precautions.

000 This conclusion is perhaps also an exaggeration to which they have resorted in their eagerness to contrast the affectations of city women with the natural state observed in country women, especially native ones. And thus, for example, Estrabón says, when talking about the Cantabrian women of Spain: "They were, these women, very tough, and it happened that when, during their work, they found themselves in labor, they went away for a while and then later, having washed and wrapped up the newborn, they returned to work."

842 As for the Pemón, although they are brave in giving birth and even in some cases refuse any help at all, and although, when surprised during a trip by childbirth, they continue the

P /55 cont./
842 trip the next day, they do maintain several precautions such
P as putting on moriche sandals, abstaining from certain foods and from certain acts, nor do they dare to raise their voices.

[114] 118. The patriarch of modern ethnology, Father W. Schmidt, director of the Vatican Ethnological Museum, sees three or four degrees of this custom of the couvade: a) abstinence from certain foods; b) abstention from certain acts; c) absolute rest up to staying in bed; d) an imitation by the man of the pains of childbirth in women.

The Pemón Indians (the men) at the present time only practice the couvade in the first two degrees. It would seem that formerly they also practiced the third degree, but only as a consequence of the first two, since if the Indian wishes to maintain a rigorous diet and in addition must abstain from most operations, the most logical and natural thing is that he should lie down in his hammock and rest, or, as they themselves say in their language, adopt the horizontal position, (esuraika), which is the least tiring one.

From this it is not necessary to infer that the diet should be fasting, nor even less should we believe in bloody mortifications, when precisely what is trying to be avoided is all pain, all fatigue, and all unbalance which by repercussion might
C damage the tender infant. For this I judge most exaggerated
114 and even contradictory what Roberto Agramonte says about the
846 Caribes, documented in who knows what acts: "Among the Caribes, the man /56/ fasted for six months and became as thin as a skeleton; the fast consisted of eating cassava: at the end of 40 days of fasting (so exact?) the members of the family covered him with deep scratches until he bled and to martyrize him even more they washed his wounds with water and red pepper: then he returned to his hammock, completely sick and in pain, and continued the fasting until the seventh month,
P when he could now eat meat and fish." Let us note once more
101 that the Pemón, with whom we are dealing, are clearly Caribes, and among the most primitive of them.

parents and children, and friends there are evident expressions of pleasure and consideration, exchanges of gifts, and efforts to please. Children play together in greatest amity (Figs. 81, 82)[1] and it is common to see boy chums who are almost always together and often stand arm in arm.

Children in general lead unusually happy and secure lives. Although not given tasks beyond their strength, they are not treated as something apart from adult life but are integral members of society like everyone else and share in all activities on an equal basis. They are well treated and deferred to as much as one adult would defer to another. They seldom need disciplining, because they act much like their elders beyond a greater playfulness, which is quite innocent, and no adult activities are categorically forbidden them. We never saw a child disciplined and saw few cases of their needing it, in our opinion. The small babies cry infrequently because they usually get what they want without crying. Several times when a baby cried for something that an older child had, the older child gave it, even if a little reluctantly.

Until they can walk, children almost never leave their mothers. They are carried everywhere in the baby-sling, to such an extent that a sling with a baby in it seems part of an adult woman's costume (Fig. 83).[2] The baby never feels insecure, because he is always with his mother, and he is never hungry, because her breast is always there for him to help himself. He is an honored and protected member of society from his first breath. There can be little doubt that much of the placidity and amiability of the people has its origin in the baby-sling. Most civilized mothers could learn a great deal about the psychological, if not the physical, care of infants from the Kamarakotos. Their system does not, as some theorists would suppose, produce what we would call "spoiled" children, but produces happy and reasonable ones.

Some Carib tribes have practiced extensive infanticide and perhaps some still do. Of course the Kamarakotos deny this in their case, and it is so contrary to their characters that they are doubtless truthful in this denial. They seem greatly to desire children. Orphans are adopted, usually but not always by a paternal uncle, as a matter of course and are in every respect treated like their own children by the foster parents. No woman said or seemed to feel that she had too many, or even enough, children.

Modesty.

The Kamarakotos are extremely modest, but only on one point. Adults do not expose the pubic region, even before members of the same sex. Men and women show no particular reticence in performing physiological functions in plain sight of persons of either sex, but manage to do so in such a way that the pubic region is not in view. Very small boys are not embarrassed at being quite naked, but as soon as the loincloth is put on they begin to show modesty.

[1] [see pp. 265a and 265b, category 116 - Analyst]
[2] [see p. 280a, category 116 - Analyst]
[Text continues on p 266]